

**CHILD SERVICES INFORMATION SESSION
JOINT LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE ON
MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES AND
SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES**

**December 7, 2004
10:00 AM, Room 421 LOB**

The Co-Chairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services (LOC) convened an information session regarding collaboration of services to children on December 7, 2004, in Room 421 of the Legislative Office Building. Members present were Senator Martin Nesbitt, Co-Chair; Senators Austin Allran, William Purcell and Cecil Swindell.

Dr. Alice Lin, Project Manager, Kory Goldsmith, Jim Klingler and Rennie Hobby provided staff support to the meeting. Attached is the Visitor Registration Sheet that is made a part of the minutes. (See Attachment No. 1)

Senator Martin Nesbitt called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance. He told those present that Representative Insko had a conflict and therefore could not attend. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made and the minutes from the November 17th meeting were approved.

Senator Nesbitt asked Kory Goldsmith, LOC Counsel, to give a synthesis of the last meeting and to share information that has been received since that time. Ms. Goldsmith explained that after the last meeting, the Divisions, agencies, and locals were asked to examine the barriers to collaboration, reduce those barriers to three items, and give specific solutions. She said she took the suggestions and compiled them into one document. (See Attachment No. 2) She told the group that case management was not in the document because the Co-Chairs were looking at this issue in a different setting.

Ms. Goldsmith reviewed the chart showing the major barriers and suggested solutions. Specific barriers included: 1) Lack of leadership or clear policy directive; 2) Multiple/conflicting legislative policy directives; 3) Lack of accountability; 4) Lack of database with cross-agency information about which children are being served by which agencies; 5) Resources; 6) Agencies can not share information about individual children receiving multiple services, 7) Lack of or uneven distribution of appropriate treatment programs and residential placements; 8) Children who are subject to both abuse/neglect and delinquency petitions may not receive appropriate services; 9) Lack of training in how to collaborate and 10) Communication.

Senator Nesbitt opened discussion with the group by stating that collaboration was critical in helping children and that this committee was charged with reporting suggested ways to improve collaboration to the LOC, which in turn would introduce legislation to the General Assembly. He asked Ms. Goldsmith to compile suggestions made at the meeting today into a report for the committee to review at the next meeting in January. Secretary George Sweat of the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) said that his Department has a State Advisory Council that oversees DJJDP. He noted that part of the charge to that group was to bring together

collaboratives among other agencies. He suggested that a State level Advisory Council be established with representatives from all levels to oversee all agencies, to see that funding and resources are being shared, and make recommendations to the Legislature. He said the key is the subcommittees that work on specific issues and report back to the Council at which point the Council sees that collaboration is or is not taking place between agencies.

Senator Nesbitt suggested that an oversight committee at the Legislative level be created to serve as a catalyst. He asked for input from the group on a structure that could be created. Secretary Sweat responded that the different Department heads together at the State level should be able to make changes through collaboration. He noted that all of them were linked to different Legislative committees with funding being approved by those different committees, not in conjunction with each other. This can often impact an agency negatively due to a lack of oversight of those committees. Senator Nesbitt suggested that staff meet and share information and encourage collaboration between Legislative committee chairs.

Regarding structure, Dr. Rosch, Co-Chair of the State Collaborative, suggested that incentives could be created. He said that if requests were made based on the need for common products, products could be produced by agencies meeting together. Senator Nesbitt asked Dr. Rosch to spearhead a subcommittee to recommend a structure. The group agreed to meet and come back with a recommendation to the committee.

Elizabeth Vickery, Co-Chair of the Chatham County Local Collaborative, emphasized the importance of having families represented at the table in order to offer a reality check on how collaboration is working.

Dr. Leah Devlin, State Health Director said prevention was critical. She said that early intervention was important for all children at risk and that to focus on outcomes would drive the structure. She stated that a Cabinet level collaborative was a good idea and a mechanism to report to the General Assembly was needed.

Senator Nesbitt stated that he was going to recommend that a study commission look at the collaborative efforts in other states.

Leza Wainwright, Deputy Director of the Division of MHDDSAS, requested that when looking at a structure that would work, that we also look at what existing groups that structure might be able to supplant. Senator Nesbitt agreed that there were too many meetings taking place in some instances and that there may be others that need to be meeting.

Regarding the lack of accountability, it was suggested by Dr. Rosch that other states have scales showing how groups are collaborating. He said that when the Legislature asks for information about what people are doing, it does tend to alter behavior. He suggested that the Legislature could look at the degree to which decision makers are at the table, and the degree to which communities are blending funding and training. Senator Nesbitt responded that this could be part of an overall study commission that would include studying incentives.

Kevin Ryan from the Department of Public Health suggested that the commission also look at common outcomes to ensure that activities are targeted at the outcomes that policy makers are trying to achieve.

Senator Nesbitt expressed concern over a shared database. He said that a child's records must be protected and he questioned how agencies could share information and still maintain confidentiality. Dr. Rosch said that substance abuse and education have the toughest confidentiality requirements. There are protocols in order to share records in place in other states. Martha Kaufman said that there was a pilot program being implemented in Durham County in which they are using a cross-agency consent that will allow agencies to share information by focusing on systems of care and a common set of outcomes. Senator Purcell stated that some people hide behind confidentiality laws and can interfere with a patient's care. Marguerite Peebles, DPI said there were two different issues. One is the collection of data and the second is the continuum of services for kids. She said that often a child is receiving services outside of school and the schools are not included when they should be. Senator Nesbitt said this issue is very complex and suggested that it be referred to a study commission.

Senator Swindell suggested that collaboration was needed on other levels as well as children. He suggested that as Chair of the Commission on Aging, there were so many different avenues for senior citizens that the left hand did not know what the right hand was doing. Involving those at the senior level of management in State Government would give an opportunity for a broader collaboration.

Senator Allran emphasized the importance of leadership from the top down. He said the Legislature could not run the Executive Branch because of the separation of powers. He suggested creating a study commission comprised of the Governor and the Secretaries of the various agencies was needed to collaborate in order to make changes. He said that with the Legislature controlling funding, changes would be made.

Senator Nesbitt told the group that the issue of collaboration was assigned to the LOC and it takes time to have an effective study with effective results. He said a study commission that could look at the issues over several months was an excellent idea. He asked those in attendance to meet with staff and make recommendations so the staff could in turn present a report to the LOC and then to the General Assembly. Senator Nesbitt said the group would come together again in January to review those recommendations.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM.

Senator Martin Nesbitt, Co-Chair

Rennie Hobby, Committee Assistant